Shri P. Chengal Ready, C/o Confederation of Indian Industry and Shri Sahat Mehta of Gujarat Pradesh Nationalist Congress Party in which the following issues have been* raised:

(i) Need for separate Union Budget presentation by Minister of Agriculture.

(ii) Need to consider inclusion of Agriculture in Concurent list.

(iii) Government should take steps to prepare National Agriculture Index.

(IV) Transport cost for agriculture produce and other allied products be subsidized (both for inter-state transport and overseas transport).

(V) Disinvestment in public sector and reinvestment in irrigation sector.

(vi) Reorganizing Commodities Boards and establishing new Commodities Boards.

(d) Agriculture being a State Subject, the State Government is responsible for implementation of policies and programmes for development of agriculture in the States. The Union Government recognizes its responsibility towards the agricultural sector. Steps are accordingly undertaken and plan provision made to enhance agricultural production and productivity through various Schemes and Programmes to raise the Income of farmers and for augmentation of their living standards. The plan allocations cover crop production programmes, marketing reforms and creation of marketing & storage infrastructure like godowns and cold storages, soil and water conservation, on Farm Water Management to provide irrigation facilities in Eastern India, plant protection measures, cooperation. horticulture development and promotion of high yielding varieties of seeds. The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation also handles issues related to international trade of various agricultural commodities. In view of this, there is no need for a separate budget on agriculture on the lines of General and Rail Budgets and for its transfer to the Councurent List.

Alternative strategy for compensating drought affected farmers

478. DR. PRABHA THAKUR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) whether Government have formulated any alternative strategy to compensate the farmers of drought affected States and for their damaged crops, the loans taken for agricultural purposes as well as the interest on such loans;

(b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefore;

(c) whether Central Government have formulated any welfare policy for farmers to salvage them as well as agricultural labourers of affected States from miserable condition; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (d) The Government is implementing the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) which provides for compulsory coverage of the farmers availing crop loan from the banking institution. Under NAIS, compenstion is paid to the insured farmers if the crop yield falls short of guaranteed yield. Pursuant to the announcement made by the Finance Minister on 18th June, 2004, banks have been advised to reschedule/restructure the debts of the distressed farmers in the calamity-affected areas. As a further reieif measure, Banks have also been permitted to advance loans to the farmers who face acute distress becuase of the heavy burden of debt from the non-institutional lenders. Besides, financial assistance under National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF)/Calamity Relief fund (CRF) and foodgrains from the special component of Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) are provided to the farmers affected by natural calamities including drought. In order to protect the farmers from the adverse effect of market price fluctuations, the Government also announces Minimum Support Price (MSP) for the selected items of agriculture produce and undertakes their procurement operations.

Increase in support price of millet

† 479. DR. PRABHA THAKUR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) whether Government are contemplating to increase the support price of millet;

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